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First Day Jitters: Teachers Have Them, Too

Kay Hyatt

College of Education, University of Maine

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First Day Jitters: Teachers Have Them, Too

ORONO, Maine -- The beginning of a new school year is full of excitement - and anxiety - but not just for students. New teachers seeped in the myths of super teachers of print and film and filled with visions of working wonders with students have some tough lessons to learn, according to classroom veterans who tell it like it is in a new book, "Oops: What We Learn When Our Teaching Fails."

In 47 brief stories, the teachers reveal their failures, pain, frustrations, and most embarrassing and humiliating experiences. They also drive home the most realistic lesson of all - it's okay to fail; that's how students - and teachers - learn. The teacher-authors rebound with optimism and humor, learning from their mistakes and from their students. They also learn that even the most heroic efforts often can't change deeply entrenched educational and societal problems.

Edited by associate professors of literacy Brenda Miller Power of the University of Maine and Ruth Shagoury Hubbard of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, "Oops" is a world where things can - and do - go from bad to worse in the classroom. But the classroom war stories also are proof that the times you fail are the best teaching opportunities, according to Power.

"Society expects teachers to be all knowing and perfect. It's hard, but important to acknowledge, at least to ourselves, that we're not," she says. "It's reassuring for any teacher who's ever had a bad day, week or month, and particularly for new teachers, to pick up an essay by someone who went through the same experience and survived to write about it.

"Oops: What We Learn When Our Teaching Fails" is published by and available from Stenhouse Publishers, 226 York St., York, Maine 03909 (207) 363-9198, editorial and marketing; 1-800-988-9812, orders. \$15.

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Contact: Kay Hyatt, (207) 581-2761



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